

COLLECTED TRADITIONS
AND SCATTERED SECRETS
Eclecticism and Esotericism in the Works
of the 14th Century Ashkenazi Kabbalist
Menahem Ziyoni of Cologne

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There are many examples of authors of mystical works who consciously chose to retreat to the role of copyists and collectors of already existing traditions. The emphasis in Kabbalistic works is on recording mystical traditions, while personal reports of mystical experiences or clearly individual expositions of mystical themes are rarely found in the large corpus of kabbalistic works. Jewish mysticism clearly favors tradition over originality. Even highly creative and innovative works such as the *Zohar*, the late 13th century classical work of the early Kabbalah, pose as ancient tradition untouched by medieval hands; the choice of a pseudepigraphic form for this work demonstrates how important it was for its authors to emphasize the traditional character of their work and to disguise themselves and their mystical efforts.¹ The many kabbalistic works that were composed as anthologies or “mosaics” of tradition avoid such radical means of disguisement as pseudepigraphy, but still seem to present us with a remarkable void where we would expect to find an author. Exactly for this reason they have remained rather neglected in research: they seem secondary to the works they drew on, lacking in originality and individual force. We are very much trapped in our modern valuation of individuality and innovation. This article attempts to illuminate the special place of mosaic works and collectanea in kabbalistic literature and its specific character, using the works of an unjustly neglected 14th century kabbalist as a focus.

The writings of the Ashkenazi kabbalist Menahem Ziyiyoni are exemplary of the problem of collected works. He was active as a mystic and poet in the 1370s and 1380s in Germany, and made equal use of the mystical traditions of the *Hasidei Ashkenaz*, the German pietists, and kabbalistic materials originating in northern Spain. A journey to Jerusalem in the mid-1350s had apparently allowed him to collect a very wide range of kabbalistic sources. Both of Menahem Ziyiyoni's works reveal themselves as anthologies of traditions, made up of hundreds of smaller blocks of materials collected from dozens of sources. Not surprisingly, neither of his works, the *Sefer Ziyiyoni*, a commentary on the Torah, or the *Zefunei Ziyiyoni*, a collection of more controversial traditions on the evil emanation and demons, have merited much scholarly interest. Why spend time on a kabbalist, whose works can be broken down into smaller units of other works which we already possess? Yet in the very act of combining these traditions something new was created. Ziyiyoni did not simply sum up the current approaches to different basic speculations of the Kabbalah, but expressed his own original interests with words loaned from other books. He was not eager to impress his readers with his own insight, quite the contrary; but as readers contemplating his ideas from a distance and within the framework of his time and its activities, we are in fact capable of distinguishing interests that were unique to him, or typical of his mystical outlook. Mosaic works necessarily reflect the outlook of the compiler who chose and combined the different materials.

Anthological composition expresses the feeling of the author that he is speaking out of tradition and in agreement with other writers. The special feature of compiled works is that different types of traditions and interpretative modes can coexist within their frame: we will see how Ziyiyoni brought together philosophical, kabbalistic and pietistic ideas and thereby the different hermeneutical stances of these currents. He shared his propensity toward anthological writing with a number of other kabbalists of his period, as Moshe Idel has demonstrated in his study of another compiler, the Italian kabbalist Menahem Recanati.² The creation of this special literary form, the mystical anthology, is thus clearly a function of a specific phase of the development of the Kabbalah. I suggest that these kabbalists responded to two different needs: the wish to achieve a certain degree of alignment between the different mystical schools and stances that had rapidly crystallized in Europe and the Middle East within one hundred years, and secondly a new willingness to promote a controlled dissemination of the mystical ideas in response to other expansive trends in Jewish intellectual life. The increased circulation of the materials implied a greater degree of confrontation between different mystical programs, and consequently a new kind of integration of discrete materials.

The kabbalistic anthology grew out of two different Jewish traditions of “pluralistic” writing. The most basic is the general tendency of rabbinic Judaism to create works of collected opinions, to which I return below. Of more immediate concern is the attempt to align different ideological stances among the kabbalists themselves. The authors of the *Zohar* had proposed a four-layered hierarchy of interpretations, the so-called *Pardes*-system, which integrated midrashic, philosophical and various kabbalistic modes of exegesis and thus affirmed their individual validity and mutual consonance. Even if the *Pardes*-distinction received a spectacular presentation in the alluring parable of the fair maiden in the *Zohar*, it did not play a central role in this work.³ Only about a decade later, the authors of *Ra'aya Meheimna* and the *Tikkunim* used the term more extensively, while Bahya ben Asher upgraded it to serve as a basic means of structuring his exegesis, as he states in his introduction to *Be'ur ha-Torah* I:5: “Therefore I have seen fit to divide this commentary according to all the four ways, in order to make it a perfect unity. By means of the four steps on this ladder man may rise from the revealed to the hidden [meaning of the Torah].” Yet this ambitious program was never actually applied in kabbalistic exegesis until the early modern period. The compiler-authors of the mosaic works might provide the answer to the riddle of why the elegantly formulated program of four-fold interpretation was not truly realized. As we will see, the anthological compositions continued this program of hermeneutic integration in a less schematic way and achieved the goal of the four-fold scheme of interpretation: the co-existence of different kinds of Jewish mysticism and thought.

A special proximity between Menahem Ziyoni and the authors belonging to the *Zohar*-circle also reveals itself in Ziyoni's approach to esotericism. The esoteric strategy he adopted was close to that of the *Zohar*-circle, which was a much less cautious practice than the one found in the school of Nahmanides, the chief exponent of Geronese Kabbalah in the early decades of the 13th century.⁴ Nahmanides had only hinted at the existence of kabbalistic mysteries on certain subjects in his *Commentary on the Torah* and hardly ever went into actual presentations of mystical ideas; his later disciples explained some of these secrets in greater details, but their works do not in any way come close to the free stream of kabbalistic ideas that is characteristic of the works of Moshe de Leon, Josef Gikatilla, David ben Yehudah he-Hasid, Josef ben Shalom Ashkenazi and Josef of Hamadan, kabbalists described by Yehudah Liebes to be the chief members of the *Zohar*-circle of the 1280s.⁵ The German kabbalist Menahem Ziyoni apparently shared the feeling of the latter group that the time had come to re-open the locked treasure of mystical traditions to all worthy and learned men who earnestly sought this wisdom. In the second

part of this article we will examine his means of protecting the mystical traditions against unworthy eyes: the breaking up and scattering of secrets within the composed work, which is an older pietistic approach.

THE KABBALISTIC ANTHOLOGY AS A POLY-HERMENEUTIC APPROACH

Kabbalistic anthological works had an especially golden period in the 14th century, even though the very idea of composing mystical works through combining older material can be traced much further back. All kabbalistic works rest on received traditions, and we will need to distinguish between this shared feature and the full-fledged mosaic works. While some of the works by Eleazar of Worms are to a large degree collections of pietistic traditions, and the *Zohar*, too, integrated traditions from various school, we should still distinguish them from the more clearly compilatory mode of composition found in later works. The 14th and 15th century, i.e. the timespan between the emergence of the *Zohar* and up to the flowering of new complexes of kabbalistic ideas in Palestine in the 16th century, remains one of the darker areas in Kabbalah research. The composition of the *Zohar* marked the endpoint of the first phase of the emergence of the Kabbalah. After the gradual dissemination of the zoharic text corpus in the last decade of the 13th and the early 14th century the kabbalistic activity in the field of interpretation apparently slowed down. Gershom Scholem's overview of Kabbalistic exegesis thus covered all of the post-zoharic epoch down to the formation of Lurianic Kabbalah with just a short remark on the ideas of the *Zohar* being continued in the works of Menahem Recanati, Menahem Ziyoni and Abraham Sabba.⁶ Yet, rather than slow down, the development of kabbalistic exegesis took new forms.

The limited amounts of studies of the Kabbalists of these centuries reflect a general tendency to regard this as a barren intermediate period in kabbalistic thought. Yet, there is no lack of prolific writers of kabbalistic books, and a characteristic feature of this period is the mosaic works by David ben Yehudah he-Hasid, Shem Tov ibn Gaon, Isaac of Acre, Josef Angelet, Shem Tov ben Simhah, Yehoshua ibn Nehemias, Menahem Recanati and Menahem Ziyoni. Bahya ben Asher, a late 13th century figure, seems to mark the turning point where works inlaid with various traditions gave way to clearly anthological collections of traditions.⁷ The very need to anthologize the materials seems to reflect the disappearance of former boundaries between the different literary communities of Jewish mystics, the increased exchange of materials and the wish to integrate them into new contexts. During this period the

mystical traditions spread from the old centers in Germany, Provence and Spain to new areas of Europe and the Orient and began to attract a somewhat wider intellectual audience. Hence, we enter a new and very different phase of the development of Jewish mysticism, which calls for new methods of analysis. Although eclectic writing is a recurring feature of Kabbalistic works, it has received very meager scholarly attention. Moshe Idel's study of the compilatory strategy of Menahem Recanati remains the only attempt to define this mode of writing in depth. Not only the works of Menahem Ziyoni, but also his close allied Shimon ben Shmuel and a number of different figures can only be fully understood when read as manifestations of this new attempt of consolidation.

The mosaic works of the 14th century became a new way of continuing the zoharic project of an overarching hermeneutical system, which integrated and legitimated a number of different interpretations of the same text. Different versions of hermeneutical hierarchies had developed within the classical Kabbalah: all the types of exegesis of traditional texts that were in use within different compartments of Jewish culture were accommodated within encompassing theories of interpretation that allowed them to coexist. Old adversaries like midrashic and philosophical exegesis were brotherly united within schemes such as the famous *Pardes*-hierarchy of interpretation: the immediate sense of the texts [*peshat*] is a basis for the meaning that is extricated by both the midrashic [*derash*] and the philosophical-allegorical [*remez*] reading of the text, and the inner meaning of all of these is redeemed in the mystical interpretation [*sod*].⁸ The authors of the *Zohar* were not alone: Nahmanides had already operated with a three-fold hierarchy of interpretation, i.e. literal, midrashic and mystical interpretation, while Joseph ibn Latif had integrated philosophy into a very similar system, leaving out the mystical level. The Ashkenazi commentary on the Torah known as *Rabbenu Efraim al ha-Torah* also used three different types of interpretations, a *peshat*-type, a midrashic and a more esoteric mode focusing on numerology and other linguistic features. A contemporary parallel to the Zoharic *Pardes*-system used in a slightly different genre is found in Josef of Hamadan's work on the *ta'amei ha-mizvot*, the rationales of the commandments, in which he also used a four-layered system of interpretation. The propagators of the *Pardes*-system even had a competitor: the ecstatic kabbalist Abraham Abulafia formulated a seven-fold version of the hermeneutical hierarchy, which avoided the symbolical interpretation typical of theosophical Kabbalah and instead presented letter-transposition and numerological ways of deciphering the text as the highest attainment possible.⁹ However, his system never reached more than a tiny audience. Even if the new mystical ideology emerging from the *Zohar*-circle was strictly eli-

tist, too, it achieved a much wider circulation in scores of kabbalistic works during the following centuries.

This open approach to the holy text which can be legitimately interpreted in a number of ways within one overarching structure, has been called semantic pluralism: the contemporaneous validity of different ways of reading the text that might yield highly contrasting and even opposing new insights into it.¹⁰ But this would be equally true of traditional midrash, which through elaboration and extension of the biblical material often takes the same text in very different directions. The Pardes-system and the other pluralistic modes of interpretation did much more than that: it brought together different theological stances within one single hierarchical strategy of exegesis. Underlying each of the different layers of interpretation was a full ideology of interpretation, a complete hermeneutics; what was achieved was thus a *hermeneutical* pluralism. The manifold systems of interpretation represent the same tendency of synthesis and accumulation of different traditions as the later eclectic kabbalistic works. Especially noteworthy is the coexistence of philosophical readings and esoteric traditions within one broad system, two different roads of Jewish thought that have often been seen as mutually exclusive.¹¹

The accumulative character of the Pardes-system fits the general "syncretistic" tendency of this circle of mystics. The Zohar is a monumental work that integrates traditions drawn from very different sources: earlier Kabbalah, German pietism and different kinds of Jewish philosophy, in the form of a midrash on the Torah. A closer look at the mystics associated with the Zohar reveals that they were themselves the product of highly diverse ideological influences: Moshe de Leon and Josef Gikatilla had both gone through a period of intensive philosophical studies, mainly of the work of Maimonides, and had composed works on language mysticism, before turning to the theosophical Kabbalah. Gikatilla had studied the *Moreh Nevukhim* with Abulafia, and a deeper influence from Abulafia's prophetic Kabbalah would thus not be surprising. Two other figures, Josef ben Shalom Ashkenazi and David ben Yehudah he-Hassid, both had connections to Germany and Ashkenazi esoteric traditions. This is also true of Isaac Kohen, who might also have been linked to the Zohar-circle. Little wonder, then, that they made use of a very broad spectrum of traditions and ideas. But the diversity of their material begged for a uniting factor, a strategy to link it all; the Pardes-system provided a common frame for their varied mystical programs. The very idea of hermeneutical co-existence seems to have been more important than generating actual interpretations through the way of the Pardes. Only Bahya ben Asher made a real attempt at a practical application of the Pardes-system in his *Commentary on the Torah*. The true continuators of the integrative approach of

poly-hermeneutics were in fact the collector-authors of the eclectic Kabbalistic works.

Menahem Ziyroni's *Commentary on the Torah* is constructed as an exegetical work, a running commentary on the weekly portions, ending and beginning each new portion with a few poetical stanzas on the central themes in this portion. Already here Ziyroni signaled that he did not intend to supply the reader with a comprehensive commentary, but rather with elaborate presentations of a few points. The distribution of comments on the text is consequently uneven from portion to portion; sometimes only a few sentences are commented upon at length and the remaining text ignored. Underlying the commentary layout of the text is thus a set of more specific theological and mystical interests, and there is a high degree of uniformity across the whole work as to the types of themes that receive treatment. In order to penetrate into this dense work, one has to follow the lead of recurring motifs rather than the line of quotes or the treatment of the biblical text.

Why then choose the commentary form? Apparently this provided the most readily acceptable frame for the project of presenting the mystical subjects which were most central to Ziyroni's Kabbalah, or which he felt were more likely to be understood and exploited by his conceivably less experienced readers. Under the immediate surface of the running commentary this work is indeed what we might call a "Kabbalah primer", which provides a persevering reader with a decent basic knowledge of central ideas such as the symbolic interrelation between the mundane world and the divine, the mystical meaning of prayer, the theurgical function of the commandments, the linguistic nature of creation, and the existence of powerful names of God. The special blend of these ideas is of course peculiar to Ziyroni, but the traditions he possessed are presented with the words of a long line of kabbalistic authorities. Not only did Ziyroni thereby demonstrate that his Kabbalah was in compliance with other major exponents of Jewish mysticism, he also accomplished to acquaint his reader with the central figures of this lore. The veiling of certain kabbalists might correspondingly imply that Ziyroni did not wish the unexperienced reader to seek for more works by this mystic.

A very wide range of sources were weaved together in Ziyroni's works, and the question that must be raised is whether this combination of extracted pieces of texts became more than a mere anthology of independent quotes. I will claim that the whole amounts to much more than its parts because they are held together by central mystical interests, and thus become different facets of the same discussion, casting new light on both the subject in itself and on each other.

Let me give one example of this eclectic mode of writing and the process of anthologization. A single verse in the Torah portion *Va-yeshev* in *Sefer Ziyoni* becomes the starting point for an extended discussion of the link between levirate marriage and the transmigration of souls, a subject that takes up most of the place allotted to this portion of the Torah. We will see how the concept of the spheres as determinant for mundane processes is taken from the philosophy of Maimonides and mixed with very different types of sources to serve a special purpose.

From the words of our Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon: Why is everything weakened from generation to generation, so that the fruits become smaller? In many places our rabbis pleaded with God to “let his mercy surpass [literally: *yitgalgelu*, roll over] his other attributes”,¹² and they used the expression *galgel*, and also said that the spheres [*galgalim*] are like the heavens. From this we understand that all sustenance in this lowly world come about through a certain sphere, that is: through the movement of the spheres and their causation.

How does this happen? Know that the upper glory is called “the face of God”, as it is said “but they shall not see my face”.¹³ This influences the lower glory, which is the throne and the *hashmal* surrounding it, as it is told in the vision of Ezekiel, and then [it influences] the image of Jacob which is the beast called Israel, corresponding to the 231 gates that can be derived from the alphabeth, through which everything was created.¹⁴ And all this is called “the place” [*makom*], for He is the place of the world. This corresponds to [the verse] “He raises [*mekimi*] the lowly one from the dust”.¹⁵ That is to say, from the smallest possible entities He raised up formless matter, and He became the place of this matter...After that were the spheres created to serve the lowly world, and it is appointed over everything, each thing and its opposite, therefore everything [is governed] by the rotating spheres that bring life and sustenance into the world below...¹⁶

Maimonides would without doubt have been astounded to find his words in the company of ideas drawn from *Heikhalot*-literature and *Sefer Yezirah*-traditions. The continuation of this passage explains how the formation of man is determined by the rotation of the spheres, adducing further *Heikhalot*-material and a quote from Eleazar of Worms, topped with some standard theosophical symbolism. This passage harmonizes the philosophical concept of spheres with the German pietistic explanation of providence as regulated by the correspondence between every created being and its angel or star above.

It was not accidental that this long passage on the heavenly spheres, which are here identified with the angels of the pietistic universe, was placed just

after a major exposition of the idea of the transmigration of souls. This is certainly intended as an innovative deepening of the meaning of *gilgul*, the kabbalistic idea of reincarnation. The preceding pages have listed a variety of opinions on reincarnation, reflecting mainly the school of Shelomo ibn Adret and the Zohar. A basic disagreement is apparent here: is reincarnation only granted to the almost righteous man who needs to fill out his allotted years or to repair a wrong act, or is it equally granted to sinners, even several times? Ziyoni offers a solution:

The one who scrutinizes this matter will certainly understand that *gilgul* is not an equal matter for all; some are closer and some far away [from perfecting themselves] according to the will of their creator. But according to the merits of the soul, the reincarnation will either be close [to bring success] or far away.¹⁷

Shortly after this statement follows the passage mixing Maimonides' concept of the spheres and different mystical ideas, culminating in an explanation of the formation of man as a process which is precisely regulated by the spheres and angels above. Ziyoni endeavored to make the idea of a personal course of reincarnation more compelling by fitting it into a tightly regulated system of personal providence. The apparent connection between the two words *gilgul* and *galgal* made this consonance even more obvious. Was Maimonides adduced here in order to transmit his philosophy to an Ashkenazi audience? Hardly; yet, it was probably the intention of Ziyoni to demonstrate how a set of mystical ideas on creation and providence typical of Ashkenazi mysticism agrees with a philosophical view. The basic need which gave rise to this explanation was however the discord between the kabbalists. The elegant reconciliation of these very different views is a piece of anthologization which seeks to establish concord.

REPETITION AND INNOVATION

The anthological form was firmly established in traditional Jewish literature. Compilations abound in Jewish literature, especially in the later middle ages. Even more generally, the juxtaposition of different opinions and approaches is an essential feature of most rabbinic works: Talmud, midrashic work, codifications, biblical commentaries. This strong urge to combine and contrast different strata of Jewish tradition and different types of sources reflects an integrative, all-inclusive tendency of Jewish thought. The all-inclusiveness of the text is a close relative of what James Kugel and Yakov Elman has termed the

“omnificance” of Jewish sacred texts: the text in itself is held to contain all significant meaning and experience, and any external wisdom or insight can therefore be shown to be indivisibly linked to some part of the text. The text can carry any number of different appended meanings. But grave problems seem to arise when we approach these compiled texts and attempt to define their theological character and inner program. How are we entitled to analyze and interpret a work that consists of endless amounts of quotes and excerpts from a wide range of works? Hardly any researchers dealing with compilations have tried to move beyond an identification of the different sources as the mode of analysis. The basic error here is the assumption that texts are stable once they are composed; medieval Jewish text were fluid media, changing their form as they were copied and transmitted. Since the texts reflected tradition, they were a collective possession, and it was therefore completely legitimate to use the words of other authors in one’s own work.

The widespread use of indirect ways of writing in Jewish mystical literature – pseudepigraphy, commentaries rather than individual works, or “collage” composition – clearly reflects the underlying notions of tradition, authority and the low status of individual contributions. The most obvious message of “author-reducing” ways of writing is the mystic’s reluctance in admitting his individual impact on the mystical traditions and ideas that he is presenting to the reader. The material is presented as pure tradition, something that has been exclusively drawn from existing sources. Innovation seems to be ruled out, since existing tradition cannot ever be surpassed by new contributions; authority lies with ancient provenance. Yet, the universe that we enter in these works is not a static one, but one of unapparent reworking of received traditions.

We can discern a number of different strategies that allow the writer to draw all or most of the reader’s attention away from his own contribution to the text. The commentary form in itself represents a way of shifting the focus away from the new composition and towards the elucidation of a firmly established sacred text, and thus minimizes the presence of the individual writer. The role of the author of the commentary is to release the full meaning of the text that is already contained in it: apparently, it is the authoritative text that speaks through him. The fact that the commentary form is one of the most encompassing literary structures of Jewish literature, reveals how ingrained this impulse was.¹⁸ The most radical means of garbled authorship is pseudepigraphical writing, where the author completely disguises himself as an actual or fictional ancient authority, a literary mode with an important history in Kabbalistic literature.¹⁹ Less radical, but still very efficient, is the compilatory composition, where all or most of the material is drawn from earlier works and rearranged as a new text.

We lack a concept of literary composition based on the collage or anthology form: speaking with loaned words can still very much be speaking one's own mind. But both the terms "eclecticism" and "pseud-epigraphy" have a derogatory ring to them: merely copying and combining other pieces of work or – even worse – writing in somebody else name, is fraud and a symptom of a fatal lack of originality in an author to our modern minds. A study of texts that are consciously eclectic thus challenges our everyday notions of what makes a text into a valuable contribution rather than a mere repetition. The interplay between innovation and received tradition is very subtle in the Kabbalah. It seems that some scholars have too willingly accepted the kabbalists' own claim of being continuators of already laid down tradition rather than innovators of tradition. There is a certain affinity between this view of the kabbalists as bound by tradition and the claim made by Joseph Dan that the larger part of Kabbalistic literature cannot be described as "mystical literature" but must be categorized as an interpretational, homiletic literature. His main argument for this radical pruning of Jewish mysticism is the strong emphasis on tradition that completely veils any personal mystical experience in the Kabbalistic works.²⁰ The mystics' claim that they are merely continuators and the central place of the commentary form in Jewish mystical literature are major obstacles to the scholar who is looking for traces of the actual mystical experience and its literary expression. Dan grants that the traditional character might be only a means to veil originality, and yet uses the distinction between "real authors" and "interpreters" to categorize the different figures: Yehudah he-Hasid is thus a mystic, his prolific disciple Eleazar of Worms merely an interpreter. Dan's exclusion leaves only *Merkavah*-mysticism, the Abulafian school and the chasidic Chabad-school in the category "Jewish Mysticism", and assigns most kabbalistic works to another group which could be called "mystical exegesis", i.e. a reproductive type of inquiry rather than a mystical practice. This is a problematic approach, because the modern concept of an author here has crept into our reading of medieval texts. Medieval men expressed their ideas through a filter of received traditions and often in the words of venerated authorities, but this does not mean that their ideas were not original or the result of personal experience.

In the history of ideas, the search for originality, novel individual conceptions or major breaks with former ideas hardly leaves room for analyzing anthologies.²¹ Joseph Dan's rejection of history without changes as "eternity, not history" reflects exactly this concept of progressive history, which Gershom Scholem introduced into the study of the Kabbalah. But the very notion of history as a record of changes and perpetual development and improvement is in itself a romantic conception that cannot do justice to the

mentality and intellectual aspirations of medieval men. Prior to the modern period any new work or thought would be endowed with credibility and authority exactly from being a faithful continuation of ancient tradition, a new copy of the original type. In the words of the historian Jacques le Goff “what was important to people in the middle ages was not what changes, but what endured”.²² Jewish intellectuals looked upon themselves as striving to regain the inner meaning of the Torah, which had once been revealed to Moses on Mount Sinai in both its outward and its hidden form, but had mouldered in the hand of unworthy generations. It is patently true that new developments and changing conceptions can be distinguished under this unchanging surface of Jewish literature, but we have to be careful in our assessment of the importance of innovation versus continuation.

There is a certain artificial quality to the project of exposing radical new thinking in works that have no pretense of offering just that, and a symmetrical injustice in denying works that “merely” combine older materials any value beyond that of a lumber room for old ideas. A balanced reading of medieval Jewish texts seems to demand a double optic: an appreciation of the authors’ intention to remain within tradition and solely make use of its building blocks, coupled with an understanding of the covert reinterpretation of these fixed elements that is the result of the perpetual recombination of blocks of text. Recombining and restructuring tradition is a subtle but efficient way of renewing it.

Rather than scanning the kabbalistic works for “new ideas”, we need to look for the protruding areas of interest in a work: what is the main interest of the kabbalist – what receives treatment in his work? Only then we are ready to move on to an examination of the finer elements in the text: the origins of the materials, the use of it in the new context and the new meaning it gains from being transplanted into this context. Determining the provenance of different pieces of the text is an enormous task – often demanding a command on hundreds of medieval and earlier texts, and with no guarantee that all the texts utilized by the author/compiler have passed down to us today – and yet it is only half the work needed. The subtle work of evaluating the interplay of the freshly combined elements calls for much more attention. The compiler plucks the themes of his choice from a gigantic reservoir of mystical ideas, creates a wholly new context for the subjects that he chooses to treat in his work, and thus emphasizes and de-emphasizes different themes at will. Even when he remains out of focus himself, we cannot deny that he is all-powerful in shaping the text, and we must assume that he acts on a motivation to promote his own mystical program.

In order to evaluate the mystical program of Menahem Ziyoni, we will

have to dig deeper into the mosaic structure of *Sefer Ziyroni*, and to expose the more sensitive traditions.

THE ESOTERIC STRATEGY OF ZIYYONI

Sefer Ziyroni has the appearance of a readily accessible commentary on the Torah, but hides the most significant expositions of mystical ideas inside itself. This double character of the text, which is readable both at the surface-level and according to its hidden meanings, is a shared feature of many kabbalistic and philosophical works of the 13th and 14th century. The new intellectual groups who were beginning to assert themselves as those who held the key to the true meaning of traditional rabbinic Judaism thus created a new mode of composition which combined esoteric and exoteric features. Menahem Ziyroni interestingly chose to continue the special form of esoteric writing that had been used by another major Ashkenazi mystical figure, Rabbi Eleazar of Worms: the scattering of smaller parts of central ideas throughout the work, at most connected by allusions.

The Kabbalah emerged from almost complete secrecy in the 13th century when mystics in Germany, Provence and Catalonia decided to commit their traditions to writing.²³ This break with the ancient policy of strict esotericism was, however, in no way complete. Although a whole library of kabbalistic works was produced in the following century, certainly not all subjects were freely presented by the authors. They found a variety of means to encrypt and thereby protect parts of the written texts from the use of unworthy persons: discussions were presented in an elliptic form or merely alluded to, or the treatment of a subject might be cut up into smaller pieces and scattered throughout a work. The abrupt endings of many discussions where the hope is expressed that "the enlightened will understand" bear witness to the existence of a rich substratum of guarded secrets which were only intended for an elect few, and never made explicit.²⁴ Hence, when the Kabbalists chose to give up strict esotericism, they instead initiated new literary strategies in order to guard sensitive informations. The works they produced were encoded books in public circulation.

This new approach appeared almost simultaneously in very different intellectual environments: philosophical, kabbalistic and pietistic. Maimonides' "Guide for the Perplexed" was the first work to be written according to this strategy. On the surface it is an exoteric defence of the beliefs and traditions of Judaism, written in the spirit of Aristotelian philosophy. To this layer of lucid and organized theology, Maimonides added allusions to more complicated

philosophical subjects which might be harmful to the belief of simple people if misunderstood. These esoteric discussions were dissected and scattered throughout the work, and thus only accessible to the persevering and careful reader, as Maimonides himself described in his introduction to *Moreh Nevukhim*.

Maimonides simply continued in the way of the ancient rabbis, who only allowed esoteric traditions to be transmitted to a man who was a sage and would “understand with his own mind” what were the further implications of the meager information given to him.²⁵ Already the first generation of Maimonides’ interpreters focused on the hidden layer of insights, and saw the work as the continuation of a chain of authentic esoteric Jewish philosophy.²⁶ The precise effect of the publication of the *Guide* on the kabbalistic circles of Europe is difficult to determine. It is clear that the emerging kabbalistic milieu placed itself in opposition to at least part of the philosophical enterprise, and it consequently makes sense to interpret the early dissemination of mystical works as part of the attempt to counter the influence of philosophy on Jewish intellectuals.²⁷ This new rivalization might however have been a mere catalyst for a process that was already under way in mystical circles.

In a very different cultural context Eleazar of Worms began to write down the mystical traditions of the pietists soon after the death of Yehudah he-Hasid in 1217. Yehudah had opposed a wider dissemination of the mystical secrets of the pietists, but with the claim that the mystical tradition would otherwise die out, Eleazar went counter to this policy. He took measures to protect the most sensitive ideas presented in writing in his central mystical work, *Sodey Razaya*. It contains allusions to esoteric topics which can only be reconstructed by a reader who knows how to combine the scattered references.²⁸ Even in this controlled way, Eleazar opened the door to a much more open circulation of previously esoteric material, although in an encrypted form.

Nahmanides remained closest to the original pattern of Jewish esotericism, which relied on oral transmission as a prerequisite for comprehending the secrets inlaid in the texts; while the pietists apparently offered hermeneutical tools to penetrate into this deeper meaning, Nahmanides did not condone such individual enterprises.²⁹ His *Commentary on the Torah* was the first work intended for a broader audience which openly acknowledged the existence of mystical interpretations, but the text merely alludes to mysteries, and provides no additional clues for understanding them. To penetrate beyond the mere surface of these secrets was only to be granted to initiates who were attached to a master and could receive oral instructions. Some years earlier Nahmanides had joined Isaac the Blind of Provence in criticizing another kabbalistic

group active within his own region of Catalonia, for their much freer dissemination of kabbalistic material.³⁰ This elitist approach is typical of the school of Nahmanides. Several works by his later generations of disciples were devoted to explanations of the obscure references to kabbalistic secrets in Nahmanides Commentary: *Keter Shem Tov* by Shem Tov ibn Gaon, *Me'irat Einayim* by Isaac of Acco and the commentaries by ibn Sahula and ibn Shueib. Although this implies a break with the very strict policy of their master, this group of kabbalists remained the least willing to present their traditions in writing compared to the much freer output of mystical writings from the Zohar-circle.

Eleazar's more open approach to writing down esoteric traditions was continued in the mystical communities that were most influenced by pietistic traditions, notably the Kohen brothers and the Zohar-circle in Castile. The first kabbalistic works which were intended as introductions to this lore were produced by members of the Zohar-circle: *Shekel ha-Kodesh* by Moshe de Leon and *Sha'arei Orah* by Josef Gikatilla. A new accept of controlled dissemination is voiced already in the prologue to *Ginnat Egoz* by Gikatilla, a work which belongs to his early pre-theosophical phase, and this paragraph is repeated by Moshe de Leon in both *Shushan Edut* and *Shekel ha-Kodesh*:

For all beings aside from God can only comprehend him according to the given measure, and not according to their desire for it. They will move forward to the end [of their comprehension], and from that point they cannot speculate any further, lest He shall continue to strike him... and from that point I shall spread my canopy over you. But do not ascend if God is not with you [lit.: inside you].³¹

We will find essentially the same idea in Eleazar of Worm's preface to *Sefer ha-Hokhmah*, where he states that "I shall write it down and reveal it, if only as drops from the ocean...and maybe some shall gain insight and understand with their own mind...".³² That is: let all worthy men attempt to read, and "maybe" some of them will be able to penetrate into the deeper meaning of what is presented.³³ Characteristic of all these writers, from Maimonides to the later kabbalists, is the double-layered character of their writings, which can serve two different groups of readers at the same time. The ordinary knowledgeable man will be able to follow the theological discussions, while only the "enlightened reader" who already has a command on either philosophy, other esoteric traditions or kabbalistic symbolism will be able to extract the hidden layer of ideas from the text. These two different groups of readers are in a sense studying two different works out of the same book.

The motivation for this decision to write down and thus publicize – at least

to some extent – the esoteric material is still a matter of debate. As mentioned, the rise of philosophy as a strong study area for Jewish intellectuals undoubtedly was a factor behind the beginning emergence of the Kabbalah. The philosophers' claim that an ancient tradition of philosophical speculations existed within rabbinic Judaism challenged the mystics' authority as preservers of another ancient layer of speculations. A few remarks in the *Guide for the Perplexed* are overt attacks on the mystical traditions stemming from the *Heikhalot* literature, especially such as the *Shi'ur Komah*, the doctrine of the measures of God. The philosophers even designated their insights into the deeper significance of Scripture or rabbinic writings as “*sodot*” or “*sitrei Torah*”, mysteries of the Torah. No wonder that the rivalization between these two groups would sometimes take sharply polemical forms; the close relationship and the similarities between them are nevertheless still apparent. Gershom Scholem tended to see the opposition between philosophers and kabbalists as absolute, but the obvious philosophical influence on many kabbalists denies such a deep split. Moshe Idel has focused on smaller areas of disagreement, demonstrating how the philosophical attempt to subsume ancient mystical subjects, *Ma'aseh Merkavah* and *Ma'aseh Bereshit*, under philosophical accounts of metaphysics and cosmology provoked the kabbalists to reveal what was to them the true content of these subjects. The audience that both philosophers and kabbalists could hope to attract was certainly only a tiny fraction of the educated Jewish population.

Yet, Eleazar's decision to commit his mystical traditions to writing was not made in answer to a growing pressure from competing intellectual groups; the influence of the new aristotelian philosophy in Ashkenaz was infinitesimal, if at all existent. His own claim was that he had no students who could carry on the esoteric traditions through oral transmission, but this is surprising. The enigmatic figure known as “Menahem the student of the Rokeah”, indeed recorded some of the mystical tradition he had received from Eleazar.³⁴ Another figure who himself claimed to be a disciple of Eleazar is Meshullam the Zaddokite from Bretagne.³⁵ The “Hasid from Narbonne” whom Isaac Kohen claimed he had met, is also called a student of Eleazar. To these we can add Abraham ben Azriel, the author of *Arugat ha-Bosem*, and Rabbi Isaac of Vienna, the author of *Or Zarua*, who both belonged to the group of Eleazar's students.

Eleazar of Worms was thus in no lack of able students that might have carried the tradition on orally. Considering both his group of prominent students and the remarkable coincidence of his decision to begin writing immediately after the death of his own – and more conservative – master, Yehudah he-Hasid, Eleazar's claim that the tribulations of the time forced him to

take this measure seems to be little more than rhetoric. The only compelling reason to begin writing down the oral mystical traditions must have been a wish to not only perpetuate, but disseminate them. From our modern perspective it is indeed obvious that the writing down of the esoteric traditions did not end with the preservation of them, which was the stated goal. The diffusion of formerly protected philosophy and Kabbalah continued and accelerated in the following centuries; part of the importance of the neglected 14th century is in fact this increased dissemination of Jewish mystical writings. Even if the prominent rabbis who chose to end the chain of strictly esoteric transmittance did not foresee the full consequences of their choice, it is very difficult not to recognize at least a limited intention of dissemination. Perhaps the publication of secrets was also part of the self-assertion of the philosophers and the pietists as new intellectual groupings, offering a new kind of Jewish wisdom to supplement rabbinical Judaism? Their possession of esoteric secrets certainly supported the claim to authority.

Although Nahmanides is the source most often cited in *Sefer Ziyoni*, this is in no way a work that continues the mystical program and esoteric strategies of the school of Nahmanides. On the contrary, Ziyoni went against the conservative approach of this group:

After the death of Moses [ben Nahman] everything was stiffened and stuffed up; those who had drunk his waters drew near with those who had kissed the borders of his cloak to interpret the secrets...he had expounded – but never explicitly. And each one of them [his disciples] guarded his mouth in secret, saying “This is my secret alone! – Keep your own and I will keep mine”, and they tied it up, counted it,³⁶ and went away to conceal it, until the words of the Rabbi together with the words of the disciples were hidden from the eyes of the understanding; and to my words, who will listen?³⁷

This is a rather explicit criticism of the conservative school of the Ramban, and one that is particularly directed against their lack of will to share their esoteric traditions with other “understanding” men, i.e. men of mystical knowledge. One gets the impression that Ziyoni, in spite of his great reverence for and reliance on Ramban, wanted to distance himself from the elitist approach of his school. The more open approach typical of Ashkenazi circles and kabbalists who were under influence from Ashkenaz, is clear enough in Ziyoni too. Any learned man could at least make the attempt to study the esoteric traditions. The poem that closes Ziyoni’s prologue to his commentary seems to address his audience directly, inviting his readers to a feast of mystical insights:

Go forth to the castle
of Him, from Whose right hand a fiery law was given,
ye men of understanding, to the feast
of the comforter (Menahem) of nobles.

There tables shall be set
with all kinds of delights,
and they shall suck the breasts of understanding,
the flying scroll.

And on the table shall be vessels
filled with insights
sweet to the palate
as honey from the comb.³⁸

The secrets will be set out as a sumptuous meal. Yet, Ziyroni is not overly optimistic as regards the size of his audience:

My sweet words shall ripen,
my pearls reach full bloom,
and my secrets gush forth
to one in a thousand.

All are invited to the feast, but one in a thousand shall eat. The secrets are all present in the texts, but hidden and inapproachable for all but the man who can himself reconstruct the concealed ideas. Studying the text thus becomes the test in itself for a man's worthiness to receive esoteric traditions. Even then, Ziyroni hardly wrote his works for the ordinary reader; the ideas presented in *Sefer Ziyroni* presuppose and supplement a basic insight into mid-rashic interpretations and the standard commentators such as ibn Ezra and Rashi, and the aramaic translation of the Torah, the *Targum Onkelos*. When some of this basic exegesis is presented by Ziyroni, it is always in order to draw attention to the hidden dimensions of their words or their correspondence with kabbalistic traditions. Ziyroni was consequently writing for a learned audience, in the hope that some of his readers would be able to penetrate beyond the surface and begin to see the deeper connections between the atomistic pieces of information.

Even though it makes sense to regard Ziyroni's approach to esoteric traditions as influenced by the esoteric strategy of both kabbalistic and philosophical works, the decisive influence was without doubt Eleazar of Worm's technique of scattering allusions throughout his works. Ziyroni not only drew a large part of his esoteric traditions from the teachings of Eleazar; the very structure of his work, with winded and abrupt expositions that need to

be combined in order to reveal their ideas, was the esoteric strategy introduced by Eleazar. Even the expectation that only very few will be able to recombine and comprehend the *soddot* on their own closely resembles Eleazar's statement in the beginning of his *Sefer ha-Hokhmah*:

I shall write down [the 72 gates of wisdom] and reveal them if only as drops from the oceans, writing them as *semukhim be-kotzer*, as one who gathers single ears of grain, maybe some shall gain insight and understand with their own mind...and the enlightened will understand and scrutinize.³⁹

Ziyyoni's proem to his commentary echoes Eleazar's introduction to *Sefer ha-Hokhmah* in several ways: he describes himself as the last and least of the links in the chain of tradition, he portrays himself as merely collecting some few secrets, unlike the giants before him who had mastered the full tradition, and he expresses his wish that the enlightened might nevertheless find an illuminating point among these "gleaned straws". It is very clear that Ziyyoni was modeling his own work on the form he had found in Eleazar's work.

Ziyyoni's special technique of scattering references to overarching themes throughout his works is crucial for understanding the doctrines that are set out in his work. The commentary avoids any systematic presentation of mystical ideas, and the appearance of the material in *Sefer Ziyyoni* is consequently chaotic: there is no organizing principle beyond the commentary format itself. Only a keen eye will after some reading notice that certain themes recur in different settings, and that these fragments fit together into larger expositions of mystical ideas. The limited guidance that has been laid down in the text is Ziyyoni's naming of different mysteries. "And this is the mystery concerning x" is an often found conclusion to a short exposition in the commentary. Often two or more secrets are mentioned as different aspects of the secret in focus in the paragraph, thus creating a cluster of interrelated or mutually dependent themes. "If you understand the secret of x you will also understand the secret of y and z." But the connections between different symbols and ideas can be even more subtle. The hints to other themes can be all but imperceptible, as in the case of the patriarchs' ways of achieving a vision of the divine. The first mention in *Sefer Ziyyoni* clearly sets this off as part of the received mystical traditions, but the later additions to this complex of ideas are more subtle.

"Make me delicacies..." The rabbis said that prophecy will only descend [*shurah*] through happiness. And the secrets of the delicacies is also the secret of the Chariot, for the necessary parts of a meal are of four kinds: water, bread, wine and salt.⁴⁰ What Abraham achieved through the

“people” [*anashim*, the angels],⁴¹ Isaac achieved through the delicacies, Jacob by way of the ladder, and David with his harp. And this will be explained in the portion of *Ekev* on the verse “And you shall eat and be satisfied etc.”⁴²

In the weekly portion called *Ekev* we do indeed find material that seems to link itself to this description of the patriarchs, embedded in a discussion of the special status of the land of Israel and the obligation to thank God for one’s sustenance:

“For only in your fathers did God find pleasure.” The *Sha’arei Zedek* says that the joining together of the *sefirot* and their union and perfection takes place through Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and through the constructions which the three of them erected. Therefore God is unified through the patriarchs, and the channels that were destroyed by Adam and separated by him, were reunited and joined together by Abraham, Isaac and Jacob...and he who understands the principles of this will understand the secret of “Only in your fathers did God take pleasure so that he loved them”. Understand “take pleasure” [*hashak*] literally, and this is the mystery of H-SH-K [*holem, sheva, kamats*].⁴³

But at least two other supplements to this complex are presented more obliquely in the text: the secret of the delicacies is introduced shortly in connection to the idea that some sacrifices are slaughtered to the north: “And he who understands the secret of the delicacies will understand the secret of the sacrifices that are called the holiest of the holies and are slaughtered to the north.”⁴⁴ The special significance of the north has already been touched upon in the preceding paragraph in the commentary; this is indeed part of another complex of secrets. The idea of the different means of the patriarchs returns yet another time in the discussion of the ladder of Jacob:

The achievement of Jacob was more spiritual [*rubaniyut*] than his fathers’, for he apprehended by way of the ladder. And Abraham by way of the “people” [*anashim*, the angels], Isaac by way of the delicacies, and king David by way of psalms and melodies, eight in all. And our rabbis hinted at this when they said that the harp of David had eight strings. And as to the revelation of the *Shekhinah*, he [Jacob] achieved the hidden name, something that the others had not achieved, for he ascended from the natural to the sensible, and from the sensible to the most abstract of all.⁴⁵

It is clear that what is being developed here is the patriarchs’ achievement of prophecy and the revelation of the *Shekhinah* as the necessary preparation for

their special mission: the correction of the destruction above caused by the sin of Adam, as it was revealed in the Torah portion *Ekev*. But there is also a connection between the special way of Isaac, the eating of the delicacies, and the offerings which take place to the north according to the secret of "From the North shall evil come forth". Anyone slightly familiar with kabbalistic symbolism will know that Isaac is a connotation of the sefirah of Judgement, which is the place of origin of the evil emanation. The special relation between Isaac and the evil coming from the north is consequently not surprising. The delicacies which are offered to "Isaac" are thus analogue to the sacrifices of which even the evil forces partake and are nourished. What is interesting here is rather the connection made between the patriarchs' achievement of a vision of the divine which guarantees their election. This is the proof of their right to the land which is pure and holy and their ability to correct what has been distorted.

The inner structure of Ziyiyoni's mystical universe is defined by these clusters and their connecting lines; the overlapping between the different groups of motifs and themes string them together into even longer chains. Even the modern scholar has no other option but to follow the hints and leads of the text. One of the vices of modern scholarship on Jewish thought has been the urge to reveal and present systematic doctrines in unsystematic texts.⁴⁶ Ziyiyoni's works demonstrate the futility of this approach, and consequently our need to approach kabbalistic texts in accordance with the mode of composition. It is senseless to impose structure and order on this deliberately chaotic arrangement; its virtue is exactly the never-ending path of the reader. Every reading reveals new connections between fine points, and changes the constellation of the different secrets; we might call it a kaleidoscopic text.

The similarity between Eleazar of Worms' approach and Ziyiyoni's is very great. Elliot Wolfson has uncovered one complex of traditions on the image of Jacob which is engraved on the throne of Glory, and argued that the writings of Eleazar can only be understood if we attempt a reconstruction of the hidden material in these texts. The traditions on the heavenly image of Jacob concern the dual symbolism of the Glory, described as having both a female and masculine pole craving for their union. The mysteries that are buried under the surface of the text in Ziyiyoni's work are, however, not in direct continuation of this theme, although the special role of Jacob is indeed of great concern to Ziyiyoni.

The scattered secrets in the works of Ziyiyoni are traditions on the transformation of man into the original form of Adam, on the role of the seventy heavenly archons of the nations, on divination, the powers of evil and the

potency of divine names, themes with a markedly magical ambience. Of special notice is the tradition on “the flying tower”, which is a powerful name of God. As in pietist mysticism, the deepest substratum of Ziyioni’s mystical tradition pertains to the name of God.⁴⁷ The divine name of seventy-two letters is here presented with surprising clarity and directness, and some of the manuscripts of *Sefer Ziyioni* in fact contained a full arrangement of this divine name, as it is adduced from certain passages in Exodus. Even though these passages were later omitted by the printers of the book, who were well aware of the larger and less worthy audience the work would now find, it is still obvious that the traditions on the name of seventy-two letters were in fact less sensitive to Ziyioni than other traditions on divine names.

Greater caution is used with regard to the name of God in the shape of the letter *lamed*, which Ziyioni calls “the flying tower”. Not only does the recitation of this name have a potential for the unification of the name of God and the raising up of the throne, it is also in subtle ways connected to the defeat of evil and the bringing of redemption.⁴⁸ Again, the magical tendency is obvious.

Ziyioni’s material on the “delicacies”, “the flying tower”, and the other scattered secrets are presented as received traditions, but were perhaps rather Ziyioni’s elaboration on traditions received from both pietistic and kabbalistic sources. Ziyioni was clearly a recipient and collector of esoteric traditions from many sources, but the emphasis on the magical dimensions was the personal fingerprint he left on his collection of traditions.

NOTES

1. One of the exceptions to this norm is the group of Catalonian kabbalists including Ezra of Gerona and Ya’akov ben Sheshet, who were not only willing to disseminate their traditions more widely, but also openly remark on their own ideas, *hiddushim*. See Idel 1998a, 41–2
2. Idel 1998b, 24–32, 81–124
3. van der Heide, 149–50. The parable is found in *Zohar* II: 99a–b; see the discussion and translation in Talmage, 316–7
4. Idel: 1983, 1998a
5. Liebes 1989
6. Scholem 1975, 169
7. Idel 1998b, 24–5
8. The first letters of the four words add up to the acronym *PaRDeS*, the orchard of wisdom.
9. Idel 1994, 87–108
10. Idel 1995a, 1989, 213–7
11. Idel 1995a, 251

12. BT Berakhot 7a
13. Exodus 33:23
14. "Israel" is here identified with the 231 gates, i.e. possible combinations of the 22 letters of the alphabet, since the last three letters R'L have the numerical value 231. The same idea is developed in *Sefer Ziyoni*, 16a
15. Psalms 113:7
16. *Sefer Ziyoni*, 19a
17. *Sefer Ziyoni*, 18d
18. Cf. Rojzman, 1989, 3 on the commentary as an "absent structure".
19. The pseud-epigraphic form was used in the *Bahir*, the *Zohar*, the Books of Contemplation and writings from the German pietistic circle of the Special Cherub. It is a matter of debate whether the writings of Isaac Kohen are pseudepigraphic or in fact traditions received from the sources he claimed, see Dan 1982 and Kanarfogel. An extravagant example of pseudepigraphy is found in Moshe Botril's writings, where his ideas are placed in the mouth of fictitious geonic sources, see Assaf 1940
20. Dan 1997, 152
21. See Idel's distinction between the history of ideas, which is concerned with innovation, and the history of culture as a means for understanding the stasis of history, i.e. the persisting features; Idel 1998c, 277
22. le Goff, 189
23. For the first uses of the term "Kabbalah" with an esoteric connotation – here in relation to divine names – in gaonic sources prior to this period, see Idel 1992, 100–3
24. For the connotations of secrecy of the word *binah*, "understanding", see Idel 1995b, 315–34
25. Faur, 24–7
26. Ravitzky, 27
27. Scholem 1984, 393–414, Idel 1990, Idel 1989, 250–3
28. Abrams 1994a, 523–5, 531–2, Wolfson, 2–3
29. Idel 1995b, 330–1
30. Scholem 1934
31. Farber, 173–4, lines 54–8.
32. See the discussion of this paragraph below.
33. On this pessimistic expression in various mystical writings, see Abrams 1994a, 524, n. 72
34. Abrams 1994b, 73
35. Abrams 1993, 22–4
36. Based on 2 Kings 12:11
37. Prologue, *Sefer Ziyoni*
38. *Sefer Ziyoni*, iv
39. *Sefer ha-Hokhmah*, 10. On the expression "*semukhim be-kotzer*" see Dan 1975a, 134–47, Dan 1975b, 47, Abrams 1994a, 524 n. 68
40. Probably corresponding to the four angels of the Merkavah.
41. The angels, who revealed themselves to him in Elonei Mamre, Genesis 18
42. *Sefer Ziyoni*, 13c
43. *Sefer Ziyoni*, 73d. The patriarchs are here connected to the symbolism of the vowels of the divine name; this is further developed in at least two places, and forms an important cluster of secrets in itself.
44. *Sefer Ziyoni*, 45c
45. *Sefer Ziyoni*, 14a
46. Cf. Faur, preface

47. See Dan 1967, 74–9; on Eleazar of Worms traditions on divine names, see Dan 1995
48. Particles of this theme are found in *Sefer Ziyoni*, 7d, 9a, 68a, 82

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SAMMENFATNING

Kabbalistiske tekster findes i mange typer og genrer, men et af de mest gennemgående træk er tendensen til at skrive værker, hvor forfatteren skjuler sig bag andre autoriteter. Artiklen udforsker dette fænomen sådan som det

kommer til udtryk i de kabbalistiske mosaik-værker eller antologier, som blev til igennem 1300- og 1400-tallet, en af de mindst udforskede perioder i Kabbalah'ens udvikling. Dette var en ekspansions- og konsolideringsperiode, hvor de forskellige grupper af mystikere kom i tættere kontakt med hinanden, og mosaik-værkerne afspejler derfor en gennemgribende harmonisering af de forskellige mystiske og intellektuelle traditioner, som ofte har væsentligt forskellige religiøse interesser og programmer. Samme intention lå bag *Pardes*-systemet, den firfoldige fortolkningsform, som blev præsenteret i værket Zohar i slutningen af 1200-tallet, og en række lignende forsøg på at akkumulere og integrere forskelligartede ideologier og deres fortolkningsformer. Den større circulation af kabbalistiske tekster skabte også nye esoteriske strategier: de mest følsomme traditioner blev skjult i teksten som spredte brudstykker, der kun kan samles igen af den kyndige læser. Eksemplerne i teksten er hentet fra den tyske kabbalist Menahem Ziyoni, som rådede over en usædvanligt omfattende mængde af mystiske traditioner; snarere end blot at gentage tidligere forfatteres ord, udtrykker hans mosaik-værker imidlertid hans personlige mystiske interesser, som kredser om spørgsmål om menneskets evne til at opnå personlig transformation og magisk indflydelse.